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Archives



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i magazine



# **i magazine**

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Expression  
It's hard to do  
I write  
Paper and pen  
Paper and pen  
My mind swirls  
In colors of ink  
Should I or shouldn't I  
Write from the heart

R. Pelletier

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## The Drive-In

I took another walk by the drive-in movie theater again today. I don't know why I'm so compelled to go down there so often. I just get the urge to go down there. Even more so, I know I need to.

It was no different than the other times I found myself wandering the back streets in the shadow of that great whitewashed movie screen. I took the same route I always take—under the highway and through the dark side of the town, past the bowling alley and the used car lots; and right before the road is swallowed up by the tunnel of trees, it's there, hanging on the edge of town like some tacky piece of jewelry that could only be loved by one to whom it holds sentimental value.

It's in decay now. Not that it's ugly that way. I still love it, that dried up field, all yellow and brown, the rows of concrete drives dotted with crooked, bent down, steel posts that once held speakers, lined up like strange tombstones, marking the graves of fallen dreams and long-forgotten adventures. It's rather lovely in a quasi-romantic sort of way, from the ominous movie screen, right down to the cigarette butts and soda can tabs littered among the lines of weeds that grow between the cracks in the surface of the stone field.

It's much more than nostalgic. There's a certain feeling that surrounds the place, a haunting breeze of fresh air that numbs the present day and allows me to dream of tomorrow through the eyes of yesterday. I remember what it was like to be a child and in love with the world, and I remember the nights.

I remember those warm summer evenings beneath the velvet sky. We'd all gather in that open plain, our cars lined up row by row, facing the vertical thrust of the white screen.

The concession stand, a flat, white box in the center of the lot fed our starving souls with soggy, butter-drenched popcorn, unbelievably overpriced candy bars, and sticky hamburgers wrapped in foil paper and scorching hot from the intense yellow lamps hanging over their slots.

The crowd that gathered for the weekend ritual was tense with anticipation. Then when the last of the light had gone, it would begin. Like the summer wind, the beam of light from within the concession stand would pierce the darkness and project larger than life images on the screen. I can remember my child eyes filled with awe at the full-length, media-oriented

fantasies. Apparitions of valiant heroes moved over the surface of wall. Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, and James Bond, all of those legendary figures in league with Hercules, Odysseus, and Perseus, blasted across that flat surface, banishing the forces of evil until the wee hours of the morning, then, at long last, I'd slowly drift into a golden slumber in the back seat of my father's car.

Peter Stone



## Soaring Eagle

I closed my eyes  
And followed  
The snowy trail  
My horse, "Soul-Chaser"  
Matched the snow  
Except for the colored  
Hawk feathers  
Dangling from his neck  
The cold air  
Smelled of wolves  
On the prowl  
The trail led  
Up to the top  
Of the ledge  
Displaying the view  
Of the many lives  
I've lived; high jagged peaks  
Low, dark valleys  
I raised my arms  
And began shaking  
The snake rattles  
To the beat of an ancient  
Song of souls  
The shaman healers  
Sent their spirits in  
To heal my soul  
One last time  
Before the descent  
My animal sign is  
The eagle  
Who is summoned at last  
Circling the peak  
Chanting  
Making us one  
As we soared  
Up in the sky  
I looked down  
One last time  
And watched Soul-Chaser  
Trot  
Down the canyon  
As if searching  
For something

Carolyn Mangiacotti

## The Borrowed Book

Just the place where he penned his name causes me to cherish it.  
A book with simple, yellowed pages where his hands, once, held its  
binding provokes me to caress its cover.  
The smell of its age holds a hint of his own, and it beckons me to place it  
on my cheek.  
The words his eyes read and absorbed causes me to search the print  
deeply, tentatively seeking the answer to why I love him so.

Donna Langlais

His anger surrounds me  
two hearts are no longer one  
free birds beckon.

Jennifer Arms

## Paternal Impacts

I don't want to be sitting here. I want to write about a beautiful pale boy who sits on his bed at night by candlelight, reading a book of names for babies and imagines having friends named Zorah and Asher. He hides the book beneath his mattress when he's done and writes poetry for the billions of children inside of him once the candle has been suffocated with his touch, and recites them in whispers until he is sleeping.

I name him Isaac. I, too, have the book, but I read it openly, for I do not have a father who misunderstands me. In his bed he asks where I am, and I try to scream, "Here!" But his poetry is so dark it seems blue and a line of light is formed beneath his shade by the moon and he is lonely. I cannot hear him, and when he is tired of asking, tired of the line of moonlight and of the blue room, he dreams of violet flowers that cover me. In his dreams he tries too hard to help me escape, and shakes himself awake and breathes in choppy whispers. He stays awake until he can see his yellow walls.

Today he climbed into a hole that he found in the woods where he played when he was five and blew bubbles for an hour all alone. He found solace there and decided that bubbles were angels, and tears flowed down his face when he saw how short their lives were.

Isaac wrote two poems in that hole. One for the hole and one for the angels. He called the first Home and the other Gabriel, and he could smile when he read them written on a rock.

I buried the angels in my pockets and screamed to Isaac that they were all o.k., but he was saying something about seeing wings tumbling down. He said Gabriel three times. Louder and louder each time, and I loved him. And so I told him.

Tonight he dreamed of me again. Tonight he saw me dancing with the hole and in his mind he saw the hole swallow me, and he tried to grab my fingers. Failed. And awoke.

Again he watched his yellow walls appear from the blue, and he cried when he saw that it was about to rain.

Because he was sick of fighting, he tired of loving me in vain. He was the loveliest being and he screamed a poem about death. And I screamed about life, but his morbid language flew into his ears, allowing nothing to enter.

He caused my insanity. He caused the beating of my heart. He caused my hands to shake. My lips to quiver. My neck to turn just so. It was then that I saw him climb beneath his mattress like a child, and lay there.

It was then that I wished to embrace him. Every part of him. Help him to understand his own beauty, and my tears caused him to stop his words which were poetry.

For a long time he lay with the rain breaking on his windowsill, making the same little sound that the angels made when they died. Only Isaac did not cry. He remained solemn. And his lips were formed together, quietly.

There he remained beneath that sleeping object, young and scared. And I sang him a song about shooting stars.

Isaac listened. But did he hear?

Tonight under the stars Isaac ran. His steps were like those of angels. He fled up the road and breathed in all of spring like a child, for that is what he is. And he ran in the dark for the sake of movement and catching up to whatever was there. Whatever.

Tonight Isaac flowed in the air on a swing that he named Robert. He touched his toes over the grass in the yard of a stranger where the tree held the swing. And he laughed and sang at the same time. But only in his head.

And reaching the height of the moon, Isaac tightened his figure into a ball so he could remember. And he would. And the lightning volt of lovers swirled about him in the magic of loneliness as he caught the glimpse of a firefly.

Isaac screamed and no one could hear him. The lights in the houses remained dark, and he knew he was the only one left now.

Isaac jumped from Robert and fell into the same ball of remembrance. There he lay, listening to his own quiet words. I moved over him. And he knew. And he smiled with the knowledge that he was still alive.

Isaac watched for the star's movement, and ran towards home.

He tried to forget the time he fell in love with me as I sailed through the air on the beautiful swing. He pushed me and turned me about. I remained silent. But I wanted to scream about love and thunderstorms and the way children draw noses. And we both ran with his hands pressed tight against his lovely pale ears until his knees bent like in dreams where you try to run from danger. Fail. He dropped on the empty street. Far from his book and mattress. Near to me. So near that I touched his hair when the wind blew like a fool.

I told him about the time I saw him make a paper crown and how he pretended that Robert was a boat when no one was looking. I was looking, Isaac. I heard your small voice sing about daisies and sewing machines. I heard you tell Robert that you loved him and I ran from my hiding place with a child's sound. I caused you to discover my place of hiding. And then you were silent for the rest of the summer. I remember how we were together one day catching turtles. And you fell in the stream, and pretended you had drowned, and I cried and rescued you through my tears. All you did was smile. No noise. And I imagine you wrote a poem that night and called it Yellow Hat for the one that had drifted down the stream.



But tonight, Isaac escaped from the round spot on the road and wrote a poem and called it Haven.

In bed, Isaac rocked himself to sleep and I told him stories about a girl who looks at him sitting in class and when she passes by, the smell of him fills her nostrils.

And he is sleeping.

Shauna Peck

## The Bat

The first bat I ever saw  
up close,  
was lying in the schoolyard  
its wings torn  
like crepepaper.

It was smaller  
than its reputation  
and nothing like  
the distorted bird  
of legend,  
that laid eggs in women's hair  
and sent them fleeing,  
hands clasped to heads,  
defending themselves  
against rumors.

This bat was another  
creature,  
a dweller of the  
heavy blossomed night,  
sprayed with tuber rose  
and white tobacco,  
darting within  
the crumpling sound  
of breeze-blown leaves,  
gliding beneath  
the stiff brocade of moon.

It lay still as evening,  
wings like the  
burnt page of

some mysterious letter,  
its body  
a fallen fruit  
browning in the sun.

It lay still as evening,  
a mouse dreaming  
of flight,  
a broken chimera,  
in a cave deeper  
than sleep.  
And we passed it,  
fifty children in a line,  
with the gaping looks  
of gargoyles.

Linda Patient



I ran along that lonely road  
Picking up speed  
As I dared to venture further  
To run along the edge of the cliffs  
Kicking gravel down to its death  
I laugh and cry at the same time  
Pretending that that's what I want to do  
Broken wine bottles  
Cut deep wounds into  
The bottom of my feet  
But I don't care  
The blood is warm  
And comforting  
I pull out the flask  
And take a swig  
Never slowing down  
The hot fluid  
Caresses my throat  
Satisfies my stomach  
When the bottle drops  
From my hands  
I stop and look over the edge  
Watching my supply  
Float through the air  
As if in slow motion  
It beckons me  
Convinces me that we can fly together  
I don't really believe it  
But I don't want to live alone  
So I leap off the edge and join  
The flask  
Hoping that I will  
Catch up to it  
So that I can take  
One last sip

Carolyn Mangiacotti

## Brother Home

Larry comes home alive, but different;  
true and strong,  
unslitable like elms,  
hating all animals,

but subconsciously, he listens for Charlie.  
No, he hears Charlie.  
Never to wood empty of arms;  
Charlie owns his own jungle.

His soul appears cold, like  
wind-blown naked ice;  
he avoids eye contact to prevent  
a look deep at silent desperation;

Again dad burns brush, as always,  
fuel assisted;  
Larry smells napalm burning.  
Burning flesh. He can taste death.

The rhythmic thud of the  
twin rotor Chinook delivers him  
to and from hell, systematically,  
like some faceless factory worker.

I offer the handshake of a  
proud, loving, younger brother;  
I receive a slab of rough cut wood  
drenched with skepticism.

I am bothered to watch him sleep.  
On the floor, thrashing, like a  
dreaming dog—  
short , wet spitting breaths —

he hears no longer his voice,  
but that of the substitute.  
Larry believes it his, but mom  
recognizes the stench of a stranger's breath.

Twenty three years of sand specks  
scurrying through the hour glass,  
each to heel,  
easier now than before;

and sometimes, he relaxes  
for that eternal second,  
and we pretend  
he never really changed.

Gumby

Manifestation inside me.

It's hard to talk about—it.

The fear in me never

cried out.

I froze.

i froze.

laura dufresne

## The Stag Beetles

We believe  
the stag beetles are following us,  
curious, malevolent aliens,  
unpolished as shadows.  
No glint of midsummer  
marks the dark shells of their bodies.

They have arrived with the thick aroma  
of newly pressed tar.  
They are moving without grace  
along the ropes of sand  
that have leaked onto the side of the road.  
They clatter inside the aluminum drainpipe,  
dropping to the pavement,  
their mandibles clicking dryly,  
angry castanets.  
They ambush our pleasure,  
pulling themselves past our faces  
as we lie on the deep green ground.

We believe  
they are omens,  
all warnings of our lives:  
candy taken from strangers;  
running into the street;  
the burning bodies of stoves;  
the black blindness of reading  
in too little light.

We believe  
that our feet have no power  
against them  
but to run and run  
through the child-long weeks  
until time dwarfs their rule  
and each year's kingdoms  
merge  
into the puzzles of  
our dreaming.

Linda Patient

## **If Only For A Moment**

To dance in the playground of the stars  
Exploring the far reaches of the Universe  
If only for a moment  
What an adventure

To gallop across the night's sky  
On the back of a winged steed  
If only for a moment  
What an adventure

To explore the deepest caverns of the sea  
Or take up arms with the mighty Achilles  
Or raise the Jolly Roger above the mainsail  
Or search out the lost city of Atlantis  
Or earn knighthood in King Arthur's Court  
If only for a moment  
What an adventure

Yet I, I must bide my existence here  
In this mundane world  
With its mundane rules  
With no escape  
Until this body grows cold  
Or its consciousness is again set free  
Absorbed into another place  
In another time  
If only for a moment

Scott DeFelice

Watching you  
Staring  
You lying naked  
Asleep  
Eyes gently closed  
Mouth cracked to breathe  
Me—  
Just looking  
Gliding my hand in your hair  
Slowly  
You notice  
With little motion  
You wiggle closer  
Grasping for my waist  
Yearning for comfort  
Longing for warmth  
A smile  
A hug  
Asleep

Heather E. Jackson



Butterfly wings fold  
To conceal you:  
Deep, color, fine threads,  
In slow oscillation.  
Walls tumble to the floor,  
Pieces penetrate the clouds,  
Leave you and me to lie  
In the sun, with the angles.  
Drifting through eternity  
On a sea of diamonds,  
Your being talking words  
Unspoken,  
Touching my conscience, and  
Unwrapping my soul.  
Wave after wave  
Lapping the hot sands—  
Crash and crest;  
Revealing Adonis;  
None as ample as now.

Tonja Kangas

## Valentine

I sought to buy you a valentine  
of burgundy moire and trailing ivory lace  
with romantic and passionate sentiment  
written in guilt and elegant hand

It would have the scent of patchouli, and roses  
and would lend imagination, to bring back  
smokey, swirling memories  
of midnight in a brass and iron bed  
and a hundred candles burning  
and the hill that smells of lilacs

but I couldn't find the perfect one  
I couldn't find the one that could include  
the pain of loss of trust  
or bring Victorian flavor to the horror  
of abuse  
and games  
and children who are troubled

Our valentine is made of paper, plain,  
with typing for the words  
the ribbons are of red tape, its edges stained  
with regret.  
It is scented with heartbreak, and crumpled  
out of anger

But sometimes when I take it out  
of the drawer that's filled with jewelry  
and rhinestone buttons

I whisper off the scented powders that

have somehow settled on it  
I pass my hand upon it, to smooth it  
I lay it in the sun on the old oak dresser  
to soften its harshness

I may sprinkle it with dried petals  
and a bit of my best perfume  
I'll place it in position  
and tilt my head just so  
and from the right perspective it  
could be cut from finest parchment  
with small roses all around it  
and trailing satin ribbons  
with words of years and empathy  
written in elegant hand.

Debra Johnson

Revenge, so sweet,  
for me, is true—  
I think of this,  
when I think of you.  
You crushed my life  
without a thought,  
but now it's you,  
the one who's caught!  
I wish I'd been there  
when you fell,  
to laugh and wave,  
and wish you well.  
But it's enough for me to see  
that you feel the pain  
you once caused me.

Jennifer Arms



## **Betrayal**

Who has not been in the dark woods  
Where day peels shadows from the trees,  
Where light falls like shards of glass,  
Shattering you by degrees?

Who has not lain beneath the mourning pines,  
Where needles break to slit the ground,  
Where cries of birds lunge like knives,  
Sealing in your grief with sound?

L. Patient



The demon in the bottle sits and sleeps. When his cover is blown, his hiss is crisp and clear. A mysterious fog rises. The demon slithers out, spreads his wings, and glides down the warm tunnel, making it cool. When he reaches the pit, he sends his wicked magic throughout his newly conquered kingdom. Soon, the tunnel grows warm again. Soon, another....

Anonymous

Just as a candle  
Flickers in the breeze  
It risks its heat and warmth  
Only to stay burning  
Giving away its sweet aroma  
And so I must too  
Dance in the wind  
And dash around the strong blows  
So I may shine my light

Laura DuFresne

## **My Plume**

It was marked and, once, to one it touched,  
a world through an honest pen,  
the ink that guided across my life and pages.  
I wrote him in truth, my heart upon paper, yet,  
he noticed nothing of love, or cared little of truth,  
or, worse still, of me. But it flowed despite the  
postage wasted, for my heart never moved a liar,  
and it told every word that passed through it.  
Which is more than I can say for him.

Donna Langlais

The side of her face burned where he planted the slap. A dull ache was in the back of her head. Did it hit the wall? Her knees turning rubbery...shaky...the room spinning...she didn't remember falling, but there she was, lying on the pile of laundry.

The shock of it made them stop.

They stopped shouting...screaming...they stopped hitting...they stopped trying to win, to impose their ways...they stopped caring.

Nothing mattered anymore.

It had been over long before this.

As she lay there, playing dead, he left the room. The door slammed. Tires burned away from the curb. Dogs barked. Still.

She was not sure of getting up. Would her rubber legs hold her up?  
Could she do this without him? She pulled herself up, held on to the washing machine and tested her body...weakness....Slow, deliberate steps led her, one after the other to the phone. She dialed the only number that came to her..."Hello, Mum?...How would you like some company?"

Anonymous

And the little boy sits trembling in the corner  
Stricken cold with fear  
The beast came forth unrelenting  
His terror grew as it got near  
The beast so tragically familiar  
Hurt it will, love it won't  
The boy screams and begs  
Please Mommy, Please don't.

Anthony Gowell

## Sun at the Church

I lay motionless on the grass, my senses alert, soaking in all the simple pleasures which come from just being alive. The hot-flush feel of the sun on my cheeks. The soft red glow on eyes behind closed lids. The warm air on my bare arms challenged by the cool autumn breeze. The chill radiating from the ground into my gut warns that the afternoon heat is just moments respite. Yes, cold weather is definately on the way. Every shifting of the breeze moves the hair on my arms; each movement registers on my nerves. Leaves still clinging to their trees rustle dry voiced in the wind, and the blades of grass tickle against my arm as they sway in the breeze, which reaches my nostrils, is the slightly musty smell of earth and dead leaves.

Animals also make their presence known. Somewhere behind me, a dog barks. Birds occasionally burst into song; some will stay the winter, others even now, prepare to fly. One bluejay, in particular, demands attention with his harsh unmelodic call. Insects abound, flies buzz by, their noise grows louder and quickly fades back into the quiet of the afternoon. One cricket chirps unendingly, as though he cannot restrain his joy in warmth and sun. From time to time a caterpillar will make his way across my arm. The caress of his small feet tickle their way across my skin.

I open my eyes, the hill I'm lying on seems to rise up to meet the second floor windows of a large brick building. The building which dominates the left side of my field of vision. Straight ahead the slope of the hill creates the illusion of intersecting the trees across the way at half their height. All this I see but my eye is drawn to the two feet of grass immediately before me. There, spun from grass tip to grass tip in no recognizable pattern, glow the threads of a spider. The ephesal webbing seems to gather in the light of the sun high overhead and hold it. As the web sways in the wind, tiny motes of light dance from place to place, a little wonder, only visible by laying in the grass.

In between my arm and side, is a symbol of autumn, an Indian Paint Brush, it's flowers dead. The green buds would have opened before now in the warm of the sun, to reveal the orange petals. Of the several buds on the end of it's single flower stalk, only two are open, and these not with the flaming orange of a flower, but the down white of seeds to be scattered by the wind. The seeds spread, as the parent dies, will lay in wait through the winter , to bloom again in spring. Their lives will come to an end next fall, after they scatter the seeds of their children in the wind. Life, death and rebirth, in the cycle of the seasons. There is no ugliness in responding to the necessities of your existence.

The building draws my attention away from the flower; it dominates a third of my field of vision. Red brick to contrast with the third which is green grass and trees, and the third which is blue sky. The windows seem too few and too narrow for the building size, and the darkness behind them is unrelenting, seeming to dare the sun to enter. The building is a church, a house of God. The church is shaped so that I appear looking down on a capital L, with the white steeple rising up from the corner of the L. The steeple seems to meet the blue dome of the sky, a suggestion of reaching to heaven, but the glare from the brass cross at the top just hurts my eyes. I can't help but wonder, as I study the church's severity and remember many other churches I've seen, if God is often at home, or if He prefers to lay on the grass with the sun in His face. I close my eyes again.

Lance M. Kain

Make me  
An eternal vow;  
Never  
To be your target;  
Observe  
My colored rings;  
Cherish  
My value—  
Never  
A bull's eye.  
Instead:  
Give me  
Your tears to carry,  
In my bucket.  
I will  
Empty them  
Into the sea—  
Salt,  
To salt.

Tonja Kangas



Mr. E in the Arctic  
The sequined seals danced in ballroom fashion to  
Clapton's 'Wonderful Tonight.'  
But still no one had an idea,  
What's the purpose of the porpoise?

The ivory clad walruses  
in their judicial galmour  
clamored on the question  
and offered no suggestions.  
What's the purpose of the porpoise?  
They inquire to the uninspired.

Surely he was hired  
to wash the plates and wash the pans.  
In a most Macbethian style he'd  
washed his hands for a long, long while.

So it seemed to the porpoise that his purpose,  
the reason which he was hired,  
was to touch the ware.  
And he didn't.  
So he was fired.

So he was lying there in the frigid air.  
Was that body, sultry and bare,  
draped across the silverware?  
The seals had stopped,  
stopped to stare,  
wondering about when and where.  
they'd get their steak,  
medium rare.

thomas michael tanguileg



## I Have Eyes

I have eyes. Red and beady. The rest isn't pretty either. Crablike hands, stunted legs, an insect voice, misshapen head. I don't look intelligent, but that's why these...awful people are researching me to prove...I have a mind. But they don't think so. Why would they call me mindless thing, idiot, moron? I hate them; all day they ask me stupid questions that a...moron would think was stupid. "What color is it?" "Which is the square?" "What is five times five?" They read to me from books written for preschool children.

I have a plan to become normal, but they won't like it...it involves them giving me...parts of themselves. I'll become like them—the best parts of them. Eyes. Linda's. She has pretty eyes, and she can get new ones. The others, uh...not so lucky. Terri's head—to put the eyes in. He has good brains also. Charles' torso, only his torso. He recently had a heart transplant. Jim's arms, ex-weightlifter, still strong. Reno's legs...long distance marathon runner. Put those all together and I'll be...a whole person.

Linda enters the lab, smiles at me. I focus my camera-eyes into her eyes. She smiles again. I wave my left metal arm at her. She walks toward me. I have eyes.

David Monette

The light trickles through the crack between the boards.  
Energy shines on me, but it is only wasted.  
Ideas lost from the glow of life.  
I produce nothing from my mouth, just slow decay.  
The crack of light is no more, replaced by  
trickles of dirt pouring down on my crude shelter,  
sounding like a heavy downpour in the fall.  
Dark...Dismal...Doom....

Fred Brillinger

## Eden's Temptation

Walls crevice light;  
Desire melts all boundaries.  
Rapture limbs, strong branches,  
Willows entangle my being.  
Taste butter warm,  
Sweet cream;  
In a private place.  
Travel down, travel  
Wings, symmetrical  
Feathers  
Tremble, rocking,  
Rythm of Adam;  
Temptation of Eve;  
In cement garden walls.  
For the apple;  
For the thirst of the juice.  
Salvation today—  
Not coming, going;  
Leave with your manliness;  
I leave chaste.

Tonja Kangas

Through broken nutmeg golden rod  
Beneath branches  
Purple shadows dance;  
We leave steam prints in the snow  
Down  
    Down  
        Down narrow path

Chocolate rot and cinnamon leaf,  
Brown-sugared earth whispers your name  
Lie here and melt the frozen crust with me

With you, my love, all is spring

Cerulean sky wraps 'round the Heavens  
And me in Heaven wrapped around you

I press "forever" into your flesh with worn stones

White cotton, heavy, slips away,  
Mounds and valleys  
White on white  
I'll trace your curves with sweet plum flesh  
Till pine gold juice drops into the steam  
Cocoa skin love

Beneath winter's canopy we'll play as fauns  
Pan's sweet tune,  
A long drop of honey  
Poppy dreams of summer green  
And lips cadmium red with the taste of you

Steve Smith

## Late Afternoon

The late afternoon sun poured through the picture window, exposing the lazily floating dust motes in its bright, warm light. The damp, earthy smell of the geraniums grew stronger in the sunlight, their shadows cast upon the gray walls that hadn't been painted in forty years.

Glancing up from her paper, a faded picture on the wall caught her eye, and she stared at it, entranced in memories. It was a picture one of her grandchildren had drawn of a frog on a lily pad, its once bright green magic marker lines now faded to a sickly yellowish color. They knew that she loved frogs and their drawings had frequently included them. Now that they were grown up and moved away, she hardly ever saw them. What use do they have for an old woman like me, she thought. A single tear trickled down her withered cheek, and she brushed it away, almost angrily.

She stood up gingerly from the sagging, old couch and peered out the picture window. It was nearly time to feed the birds, she reckoned, and she needed a coat. She was eighty-seven years old, and although she could still manage about easily enough, she took a chill quickly.

She went into the front hall and took a heavy flannel coat, her late husband's, out of the open closet. He would have been one-hundred years old this year, she thought, unconsciously fingering her thin wedding band, as she pulled the coat on. Thirty years without my Leslie, she thought, and thirty years alone since he went.

Sighing, she went out onto the back porch, where she kept the garbage cans full of bird seed. She scooped a coffee can of cracked corn and a dented saucepan of sunflower seeds and replaced both lids tightly. Who knew the cunning creatures that stole through the hole in the screen to pilfer the birdseed? She thought.

Outside, the birds hardly stirred as she scattered some corn on the ground beneath the suet-feeder. She went to the clothesline that now held only bird feeders and poured the sunflower seeds, first, in the improvised milk carton feeders, and then in the one shaped like a clear planet Saturn—wasn't that a dandy one!

Finished with the late feeding, she turned to go in the chilly shadow of the big house which was beginning to set into her bones. Instead, however, she turned back toward the long idle pasture land, partially hidden by the brush covering the stone wall. Only the tops of the trees were in the sun now, she saw, and how many times had she seen the fields at this time of day? Too numerous to count, to be sure; she had grown up on this land. Grown with the cows, chickens, horses, countless cats, and even a pig or two...

She stirred, the cold of the coming night now settled in her, and she shivered. She scolded herself for daydreaming. The nostalgic memories had consumed her, as they seemed to more frequently. Though she would never admit it, they comforted her, and she did have many memories to call on.

She shrugged out of her coat and left it on the chair. She took a sweater and wrapped it around her shoulders as she sat back into the couch, picking up her paper again. She read through it , and gradually her eyelids became heavy.

The paper slipped from her hands as the memories enfolded her. In the twilight, she slept.

Jennifer Arms

How can the world change so  
in a mere instant  
Is it moving beyond me at such a pace

Maybe I deserve this boundary of age  
imposed  
Let the young people remind me  
of my fortune  
No... I would not look back

Only now do I feel ready  
to tame this thing called time  
to harness the electric energy  
of intellect  
It snaps back, though my aging skin  
may not

Gina Raposa



## Charlie

She stopped purring when we entered that dirty closet Dr. Raumell used as a waiting room. There was barely room enough for that pile of papers he called a desk, let alone room enough to wait. We had been there before, and Charlie knew it. I held her firmly in my arms, and gently scratched her balding head as we stood before the vet. She didn't struggle as she had done so many times before in similar situations. I think she'd already resigned herself to what was going to happen, but that didn't make it any easier.

I handed her to the vet. She left me without incident, and allowed herself to be placed in the tiny, wire pet caddy on the floor. Then I wrote the check.

It was a mistake to look back at her, and I knew it, but I just had to. Her skinny, toothless face looked even more pathetic through the wire mesh of the cage. I told myself that this was for the best, turned my back on her, and quickly left the office. It was over.

Over, until I walked by the filthy window. Completely by accident, I looked in to see her once again, still confined in that little cage. She was nearly blind, but followed me as I walked past the window. And as I moved out of her line of vision, she thrust herself against the cage wall, straining to see where I had gone. I fought back the tears, telling myself over and over that she was just an animal. It shouldn't bother me.

In the car on the way home I thought about her: following me around the neighborhood, sleeping at the foot of my bed, and the way she came to eat whenever we ran the can opener. These were things that I thought would make me smile, but I just couldn't shake the image of that dejected look on her face when I abandoned her.

I drove on, but before long I could no longer see the road and had to pull the car over for a second. I hoped that no one would see me.

Chris LaRoche

## The Doe

Her thirst is second only to her safety. A quiet rustle disturbs the silence of the pool in the open glade. Just beyond the gentle splashing and churning of the creek, branches and tiny saplings spring almost noiselessly back into place. Two soft, velvety brown eyes gaze intently into the clearing from a nearby copse. She sniffs the warm, moist air, testing for the perfume of danger. Gingerly, almost hesitantly, she edges up to the softly rushing stream. Not a sound, nor the drop of early dew from a leaf overhead can break her ageless concentration. She drinks in the peace of the morning.



## Ever Since I Was Confused

Ever since I was confused  
I've never known what to do  
I've always needed help with my golf game  
That damned windmill always gets in my way  
Ever since I was confused  
I've always wanted to know  
Why they call this a straight jacket  
It should be called a pretzel jacket  
A nice buttery pretzel jacket with  
Salt and cream cheese on it  
But I like the wall papering here  
Ever since I was confused  
It's soft and squishy  
The way I like my women  
And ever since I was confused  
I've often wondered to the world  
Why do they keep giving me  
That Rorschach test  
If I wanted to look at naked women  
I would have gone to the bathroom  
Taken off all my clothes  
And squinted in front of the mirror  
Do they clean the needles  
Before they calm me  
Are these belts made  
Of genuine leather  
Who holds the record for most  
Tricks done while using a bed pan

Am I really  
Way out there?

These are some things  
I've always wanted to know  
Ever since I was confused.

thomas michael tanguileg

## Trapped!

The loneliness wrapped around me and stuck like the wet winter's grass at my knees. I was standing by the highway, watching a car load of teenagers bound for Florida tantalizingly zoom by. Huge trailer trucks like gray castle walls rumbled by, obstructing my view of the road. I had to do it. I had to depress myself by coming down here again. What else could I do? There is no where else to go.

I turned around in the cold dampness of the afternoon and looked out over the expanse of this cityscape. The industrial skyline loomed before me. Rows of smokestacks and electrical towers kept an eye on me. They knew I was restless. To my right was the vast void of the train yards. Crumbled wooden walkways flanked the rusted steel tracks nearby the decaying carcass of an extinct boxcar.

A graveyard, I noted. A graveyard for the living.

I climbed the uprise along the worn path. Stiff blades of the yellowed knee high grass and dead jagged branches scraped my calves and soaked my boots. The highway, my only source of hope, was invisible to me now, hiding behind a row of firs, some with dripping white slush still clinging to the branches. There was no more snow; the rain had washed it all away. That's just like winter here in the Rust Belt—the middle of January and no snow.

I leapt off the foot of the hill, turned, and began to walk the railroad tracks leading under the highway. It was above me now, and I could hear the muffled grumbling of the cars and trucks as they passed over the bridge. I jumped from tie to tie, avoiding the deep brown trenches of murky water on either side of me. Trenches that pressed up against the cold slabs of rust-stained speckled concrete and engulfed the weeds and what little plantlife grew there. "Pot is Fun!" exclaimed one of the many spraypainted messages that adorned the walls; the most colorful stuff I've seen all day. "School Rots!" said another. I walked on past occult symbols, heavy metal rock band insignias, and the traditional "I love whoever." As the wall of profanities and love proclamations began to slope downwards and I emerged from the underground, I found a message that suited me fine. Simple red letters spelled out: "This Place Sucks!"

I took to walking the streets, once again becoming part of the landscape that I observed minutes before and pitied. The sun was going down behind the partly overcast sky, leaving an orange glow behind. It must be mocking me, I thought, as I progressed through the inhabited ruins of the Industrial Revolution. It could leave here, I couldn't. I wished it was spring and I had my motorcycle. I wished I could hop on the back of the scrap-metal stallion right before sunset and head west. I would go west as fast as I could. Faster and faster, until I outran the sun itself. And then on the shores of the great Pacific I would curse the whole damn country and ride back as it's conqueror.

The street lamps above me were the only light I had now, and I could barely conquer the hot, wet itching of my feet suffocating in my boots. During my fantasy, I somehow managed to make my way through the streets of factories and was now facing the shopping district. The glow of its neon rainbow beckoned me on. I thought about going to McDonald's and grabbing a bite to eat, but that did nothing for me. I wasn't hungry even though I hadn't eaten for six hours. I considered going down to the bookstore and checking out any new magazines, but that would be another waste of time. I was just there yesterday.

I had few options. I turned my back on the peaceful carnival lights of the shopping center and headed back the way I had come. A wind, cold and harsh, came from nowhere and smashed into me. "You fool!" it seemed to scold. "What the hell are you doing here!" What the hell are you doing here, the words echoed in my head. What the hell was I doing here? I could be on a car to Florida now, or on the back of my motorcycle chasing the setting sun, but instead I was here-nowhere. Unemployment, loneliness, melancholy, and depression surrounded me on all sides. They pressed in on me, squeezing me on all sides. They pressed in on me, squeezing me, forcing me up, up the side of that dirty hill, past broken railroad ties and crooked weeds until I was by the side of the highway again, watching the comet tails of the cars zoom by and watching for a chance to escape.

Peter A. Stone II

## Look Beyond

Madness, you say?

Who are you to say

that I am not sane?

Simply because I am willing

to look beyond.

Open your eyes,

arrest your contradictions,

relax your inhibitions.

Free your mind to see

what lies beyond here and now.

Reality: no more than a practical joke

played out on the mind of Man.

An illusion,

mass confusion.

Look beyond the veil!

Robert Davis



## The Great American Wilderness

The cars moved in slow motion lines leaving tracers like little comet trails chasing after them but perpetually behind by five feet. The faces of men and women with families or friends passed by giving disapproving and sometimes sympathetic looks. Some of them, unaware of my presence on the side of the road, continued bobbing their heads like pigeons , to favorite songs inside the warm confines of their cars.

The walk has taken its toll on me. I no longer even recognize myself reflected in the smooth cold glass of department store windows. There are advantages however: the beard, though it is patchy, shields my face against the biting November winds and my shoulder-length hair allows the rain to run off without draining into my collar.

The worst was being on the road miles and miles away from cities or towns, alone, cold and even frightened. In the cities you can at least find shelter in bus stations or the subways, out here your ass is in the wind.

I began walking backward on the side of the road and leveled my thumb, hoping to beg a ride in the warm car of some stranger. As I expected, a car never stopped. They never do this late at night for someone who looks like a lost cousin of the Manson family. I don't really blame them though; hell, just six months ago it would have been me driving by , lost in my silly mundane life.

As the last few days, I walked into the neon dawn of the American sun, thinking about where or if I had gone wrong. Thinking back I feel maybe I didn't go wrong after all. I remember all those nights lying in bed next to the familiar stranger, wondering why we were married, knowing I was missing something , knowing that my life didn't end already. She hadn't been a bad wife, and I hope she doesn't think I don't love her, 'cause I do. I just decided I had to love myself first, or nothing else would ever matter. If that sounds selfish, then I'm sorry. I would have never been any good to

anyone unhappy, and I would have probably died with a hole in my head if I hadn't left when I did. I don't feel that I have to explain my actions to perfect strangers. This is not a letter of apology- this is a diary of discovery, in the great American wilderness of the twentieth century.

Jim Jenkins

## **Cradled In The Arm Of Massachusetts**

With the sun sinking to wake China  
the spotted sand piper and I raced  
to catch the final moments of light.

The purple blossoms perched atop the bogs  
closed their sleepy petals to awake again  
some other day, to reap a new summer's warmth.

In the gray of evening, waves crashed  
against the shore like angry ghosts  
and I, with the tide, receded homeward.

Past soft flowing dunes and wind swept eel grass.  
Past turquoise tides that ebb and rise.  
Past swans in fresh water pools.  
Past the eloquence and antiquity lined along narrow roads.  
Past windmills, once hard at work, that now stand as decoration.  
Past weathered piers that hold lonely vessels in the marina.  
Past all that I loved, against my will.

But the sea was brewing the clouds into  
a tempest and I hastened my step  
to keep ahead of the surge.

Lightning sliced the sky, and it's remnants  
rolled across the Atlantic, sounding that  
my time had come to go.

I said farewell to all that will go  
on without a thought of me, all that  
is going on still.



The pillow dampened by the sea's mist.  
The hypnotic charm of a fog horn guiding ships through the night.  
The horseshoe crab and jellyfish trapped within the crevasses of a jetty.  
The sandwich glass adorned in cottage windows.  
The scent of bayberry and cedar that sweeten the air.  
And the beaches, stretches of pearl white sands that harbor a fondness  
I can find no words for.

A Bonaparte's gull screeched above  
sounding his arrival and mocking  
my departure.

On steady wing, he cut through the storm  
and I envied his agility and choice  
of the perfect residence.

And as I crossed over the bending canal  
on the silver path known as the Bourne bridge,  
I shed a tear for all it's beauty.

Donna Langlais

Celestial Moths

Feed on the curtain of Night

to create more stars

Patrick Birt

So the poet weeps  
Stuff cotton in his eyes  
Plug his side with oiled rags

So the poet weeps  
Duct tape tight his lips  
Paint black the watery sockets

So the poet weeps  
Hammer crack his straining knuckles  
Empty his tablets in ritual flames  
Nail him in coffin tight

So the poet weeps and weeps  
Begs us, pleads us to bend and weep with him  
And so I say to pathetic poets  
Sorry sir, I weep alone

Steven Smith













